

REVISED May 25, 2012



**Governor's Highway Safety Program**  
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## Press Release

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### For Immediate Release

May 25, 2012

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### **Memorial Day Weekend, A Dangerous Three Days for Driving**

The start of this year's summer season kicks off this weekend with the nationally celebrated Memorial Day holiday. Typically, this three day weekend is the gateway to many more splendid warm weather activities a great harbinger of incoming sunshine, summer festivities, and school free days for our children and other younger adults. But, the Memorial Day Weekend also brings increased traffic and a sad history of a high number of highway tragedies and the needless loss of life. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has been keeping track of roadway statistics for the past twenty five years and they warn that the 2010 Memorial Day weekend was a very deadly period. During 2010, the 397 deaths occurring during the Memorial Day holiday were surpassed that year only by 431 occurring during Thanksgiving (a four day weekend); and the 403 deaths recorded during that year's Labor Day weekend. The City of Vergennes, Police Chief George Merkel is asking Vermonters to: "Use common sense, wear your belts, be a role model for our younger folks by always using good judgment and patience while driving". Chief Merkel also indicated he will have a number of extra officers patrolling the entire weekend.

Obviously, driving while impaired remains a primary concern and always poses a critical danger to the motoring public. When we think of celebratory drinking and resulting tragedies, we think of New Year's Eve. NHTSA research reveals a measureable increase in the number crashes involving alcohol that take place during all holiday weekends and also during nighttime hours. Interestingly, NHTSA also reports that on a regular annual basis only 12% of all roadway fatalities occur on interstates, with the remaining deaths occurring on secondary and local roads. Vermont State Police Lieutenant John Flannigan warns of driving while impaired: "We will have a heavy concentration of enforcement officers in those areas that data indicates are high crash prone locations. In addition, our Drug Recognition Expert cadre will be looking for vehicle operators who are driving under the influence of substances other than alcohol."

Memorial Day celebrations are an American tradition we've all grown up with. Family get togethers, backyard cookouts and group expeditions to the local beach or swimming hole are part of our very fabric. Please enjoy all of these activities to the fullest, but remember: "Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over". Also law enforcement agencies in Vermont are everywhere participating in the annual "Click It or Ticket" campaign. These efforts are supported by funds provided by NHTSA and managed by Vermont's Governor's Highway Safety Program (GHSP). These law enforcement officers will be strategically deployed to patrol in areas experiencing high incidents of impaired driving and low seatbelt use. Ted Minall the Chief of GHSP asks all motorists: "Please help us have a tragedy free Memorial Day. Make sure everyone in your vehicle is buckled up. If you plan on consuming alcoholic beverages, and have to travel, find someone else to drive or select an alternate method of transportation.

We hope everyone has a terrific, safe and enjoyable Memorial Day holiday.

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